

Bimonthly Encouragement to Sudanese Christian Workers

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“Godliness with contentment is great gain”.

These words from 1 Timothy 6:6 give Christians a terrific opportunity to live differently from every one else who lives around and about us.

Cattle raiders will steal to get more stock. Animal herdsmen may fight to secure the best grazing land. Villagers can dispute ownership of fields and tukals, sometimes resorting to violence when proper procedures are exhausted. Students may be tempted to plagiarise and cheat when they know their results mean they will fail.

In our cities materialism tries to persuade us to want more and more “things”. If we listen to advertising or fashion we may easily become dissatisfied with things we have because we are told we “need” the latest, from mobile phones through shoes to glasses and kitchen appliances.

Corporately we can become annoyed because we do not have a hospital, a school or a good link road for our area. Perhaps political promises are broken. We respond by demanding “our rights” in a very unchristian way.

Should Christians be the same as everyone else? Or should Christians see an opportunity to witness to the fact we do not live only for this world, but much more for the next?

We are always free not to join in.

Chapter 6 begins by saying, “All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God’s name and our teaching may not be slandered”, verse 1.

I suggest this means for Christians today that, although we may not be “slaves” as Paul knew them in his time, our response to situations where we are not free to change things by ourselves, should be a response which honours our God and which helps outsiders to see this for themselves.

We do not have to go along with shameful and violent opposition. We can rightly use any legitimate means to state our case and to push for change, but we must urge restraint, and say, “No. I will not do that”, when any movement gets out of hand.

- We should follow godly teaching and not be swept along by false teaching, however popular that false teaching is, 6:3
- We should live in godly contentment and not always be greedy for more. We must realise honesty is the only policy for the Christian, 6:6
- We must be “men and women of God” – in whom people can see the characteristics of our Heavenly Father working in our lives, 6:11
- We must always live knowing we are “in the sight of God”. Even if no-one else is watching, our God is. Darkness is no defence against Him, 6:13
- We must patiently wait for the right time “which God will bring about in his own time”. Waiting is often the mark of a trusting Christian, 6:14-15
- We can “put our hope in God” and in God *alone*, from day to day, from situation to situation, from opportunity to opportunity, 6:17.

In this way we can live what is called, “**Life that is truly life**”, 6:19.

Since Christians believe in the God who is “the only Ruler, the King of kings and the Lord of lords”, 6:15, it is not at all right that we take matters into our own hands and try to seize what we want in our own way. God loves all the other people as much as He loves us! Never treat them as if they are unimportant!

It is a wonderful Christian witness when Christians genuinely say, “We have shared our views, now we will wait for God to bring them about in His own time”. We can pray, being confidently content that our Heavenly Father who knows what is best for His children, will work everything together for our good, since we love (and have honoured) Him. Romans 8:28; 1 Samuel 2:30.

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“The piety that *greedy people* exploit because of their insatiable desire for money could have brought them contentment. They fail to rejoice in the fact that they have the necessities of life: food, clothing and (we may add) shelter. 6:8. In saying this, Paul is not implying that believers should remain poor. Rather, he is pointing out that those who are content with what they have are happier than those who are never satisfied. 6:9-10”.

Solomon Andria, Africa Bible Commentary, (Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers) 2006, p.1476.
Italics added by me.

Pastor Colin Salter. (Please share these thoughts with others and refer them to my website for more study resources!).